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## NOTES ON MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

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### AMERICAN CITIES.<sup>1</sup>

**New York City.**—*Confession of Judgment Act.* One of the most important pieces of legislation affecting the financial system of Greater New York has been the outcome of a controversy between the comptroller and the corporation counsel. Inasmuch as the issue raised is one which we find in all the larger cities of the United States, its solution cannot help but be of general interest. One of the great abuses to which the office of corporation counsel or city solicitor has been put has been to confess judgment in cases of claims against the city, thus taking from the financial officers, and even from the local legislative assembly, the control over expenditures which the theory of our government contemplates. In Philadelphia, for instance, the amount thus drawn from the city treasury without previous appropriation often exceeds a million dollars. For the year 1899 it was \$1,459,556.27.

The desire on the part of the comptroller of New York city to maintain a strict supervision of the finances of the municipality led him to request of the corporation counsel that before judgment be confessed in any claim against the city, there should be a consultation between the two departments. In this communication the comptroller points out that during the last two years not one judgment in ten that has been paid out of the city treasury has represented anything but the sole, uncontrolled and unchecked action of the corporation counsel, who is an appointive and not an elected officer. "Where judgment is entered by consent or by default, or upon offer of judgment, the judicial decree represents nothing but the acquiescence of the defendant." In reply to this communication, the corporation counsel denied the right of the comptroller to interfere in these matters and refused to follow the suggestion offered. As a result the comptroller secured the introduction of two measures in the legislature, which have just been passed. The first provides that the corporation counsel

<sup>1</sup> *Municipal Bibliographies.*—The Social Division of the New York State Library has issued a series of reference lists—two of which relate to municipal government—which will prove of very great value to investigators in this field. Reference List No. 6 covers the subject of Central Control of Police; Reference List No. 7 the question of Municipal Home Rule. Both are worked out with great care, the selection being made from those works and reports which are of permanent value. With a series of reference lists of this character it will be possible to cover the whole field of municipal government and place in the hands of everyone a guide for the study of concrete problems.

"shall not institute any proceedings for acquiring title to real estate by condemnation proceedings, except for opening streets, unless the same shall have been approved by the concurrent vote of all the members of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, upon a statement to be furnished said board of the valuation of such real estate as assessed for purposes of taxation ; further, that the Board of Estimate and Apportionment shall have power by a majority vote to direct such changes to be made in the forms of contracts and specifications as may seem to promote the interests of the city. " Furthermore," that the corporation counsel "shall not be empowered to compromise, settle or adjust any rights, claims, demands or causes of action in favor of or against the city of New York, or to permit, offer or confess judgment against the city, or to accept any offer of judgment in favor of the city, without the previous written approval of the comptroller ; and in case of any claim for a money judgment exceeding ten thousand dollars, or for relief other than in the nature of a money judgment, the previous written approval of the mayor shall be also necessary."

The second act provides that "all contracts involving an obligation payable from the city treasury for work to be done or supplies to be furnished, not made at public letting in the manner provided in section 419 of this act, shall be evidenced by orders or requisitions in writing upon forms to be approved by the comptroller, signed by the proper head of department, board, officer or commission. Such orders shall either state the specific amount agreed upon for the said work or supplies, or shall state that payment therefor shall be at the current market rates, but in either event it shall be lawful for and the duty of the department of finance in auditing and paying claims against the city treasury arising thereunder, to deduct therefrom any charge in excess of such current market rates ; provided, however, that such action by the department of finance shall not be conclusive to the extent of preventing creditors of the city of New York from disputing the justice of such determination by a proper action at law. No claim shall be enforceable at law against the city of New York for work done or supplies furnished, not arising out of a contract made at public letting, and excepting purchases for contingencies of less than ten dollars unless the same shall have been duly ordered by the proper head of department, board, officer or commission in the manner herein provided. The comptroller may require any person presenting for settlement an account or claim for any cause whatever against the corporation, to be sworn before him touching such account or claim, and when so sworn, to answer orally as to any facts relative to the justness of such account or claim."

*Revision of the City Charter.*<sup>1</sup> The charter revision commission appointed by the governor, under the law passed by the legislature, is composed of fifteen citizens of the city appointed to represent the five separate boroughs. The chairman of the commission is Mr. George L. Rives, one of the rapid transit commissioners. The commission began its work immediately after its appointment. A public hearing has been held in each borough, at which the views of a number of persons and organizations upon important points involved in the revision have been presented to the commission. Although the commission has not made any formal declaration of the principle upon which it will work, it is very improbable that it will undertake to make any radical changes in the scheme of the present so-called charter. That instrument is in form not a charter, in any proper sense; it is rather a body of ordinances. With a charter of this character, the legislature is called upon to act in large measure as the local law-making body of the city. Indeed, the chairman of the senate committee on affairs of cities complained last winter that his committee was in effect a board of aldermen for the city of New York.

The organization of citizens more particularly interested in the revision of the charter is the City Club. While that body has not yet formulated all the suggestions which it will make before the commission, it may be said that there is a widespread feeling that it is hardly worth while to expend a great amount of vitality upon the patching of the present hopelessly defective instrument. It is proposed that a special committee of the City Club, composed of members of the club having special knowledge of the subject, shall formulate suggestions as to the amendment of that part of the charter relating to the department of education. This subject needs very careful attention, and is, to a great extent, separable from the rest of the charter. The club has under consideration other important subjects, such as proportional representation, and the administration of the tax department. It has urged upon the commission (1) that the mayor's power of removal, now limited to the first six months of his term, should be extended throughout his term; (2) that the Municipal Assembly, now composed of two houses, should consist of a single house, probably elected by a system of proportional representation, and that in any case at least some of the members should be elected otherwise than by the present method of returning one member from each separate district; (3) that the charter should provide for municipal ownership and control of water supply and water front; (4) that the police department should be under a single commissioner in place of the so-called bi-

<sup>1</sup> Communication of James W. Pryor, Esq., Secretary of City Club, New York City.

partisan board of four members, and that the bureau of elections should be separated from the department. The views of the City Club as to the time expenditure necessary for a satisfactory revision of the charter, not having been met in the law under which the commission acts, the disposition of the club is to believe that, however industrious and intelligent the commission may be, it can do only very imperfect work under the conditions imposed upon it.

*City Officials and the American Ice Company.* During May interesting developments took place, tending to show that the mayor and other city officials, as well as leading Tammany men not holding municipal office, were interested largely in the American Ice Company, a corporation doing business with many of the city departments, and depending in large measure upon the favor of the dock department for the necessary facilities for introducing its ice into the city. The attorney-general of the state has instituted proceedings to revoke the certificate of the ice company to do business in this state; and, under a section of the charter of the city, a special inquiry as to the connection of municipal officers with the ice company is in progress before a supreme court judge.

**Pennsylvania.**—*Ballot Reform.*—The Union Committee<sup>1</sup> for the Promotion of Ballot Reform and the Merit System in Pennsylvania has been formed by representatives from the Pennsylvania Ballot Reform Association, the Civil Service Reform Association of Pennsylvania and the Municipal League of Philadelphia to undertake the work of appealing to the friends of honest government in the state to organize and conduct a non-partisan educational campaign in behalf of these two objects. Already a large number of petitions have been circulated and signed, and a large quantity of literature has been prepared, setting forth the urgent necessity for the introduction of ballot reform and the merit system in Pennsylvania. A representative of the Committee has been working in various parts of the State, and thus far two auxiliary committees have been organized, one in Pittsburg and one in Scranton. Both of these committees are the outgrowth of the work of the field representative. They represent the business and professional elements of the community. It is the expectation of the Committee that similar work will be done in other parts of the state, so that by the time the Legislature convenes in January, 1901, there will be a chain of auxiliary organizations, all pledged to active co-operation.

One of its leaflets dealing with ballot reform sets out the work which has been done during the past ten years in behalf of the Australian

<sup>1</sup> The officers of the Union Committee are Clinton Rogers Woodruff, chairman; Cyrus D. Foss, Jr., secretary; Stuart Wood, treasurer.

system, and recites the various successful attempts of the political machines to thwart these efforts; it also sets forth the necessity for the enactment of an adequate personal registration law and an up-to-date election code.

*Convention of Cities of the Third Class.* For some years the cities of the third class of the State of Pennsylvania have been endeavoring to secure amendments to the Corporation Act under which they are organized. Under the present system of classification in the State of Pennsylvania all cities with a population between ten thousand and one hundred thousand are included in the third class. The great difficulty has, therefore, been to bring about united action by such cities, owing to the impossibility of reaching an agreement on the needs of cities of such different size. Those cities like Scranton, with a population of eighty thousand or over, require a form of organization far too complex for a small town like York, and conversely, the simplicity of organization adapted to the smaller towns is ill-adapted to meet the needs of the larger. Partly owing to this fact and partly owing to the lack of concentrated action on the part of all the cities of the third class, no legislation has as yet been secured. Some months ago the mayors of several of the larger cities determined to call a convention for the purpose of forming a permanent organization of the cities of the third class in order to secure the necessary legislation. A call was sent for a convention at York to be held on the 15th of May. To this convention each of the twenty-five cities of the third class sent as representatives, the mayor, the city solicitor and two members of each branch of councils. At this convention a permanent organization was effected. The work of the convention was outlined in an address by Professor L. S. Rowe, of the University of Pennsylvania, in which the following recommendations were made for the consideration of the convention:

1. The present system of classification is ill-adapted to the requirements of cities of the third class, in that it links together cities of such diverse needs.

The division should be as follows :

First Class—Cities with a population of over 250,000.

Second Class—Cities with a population of from 50,000 to 250,000.

Third class—Cities with a population of less than 50,000.

2. The divided local representative assembly while justified in the national and state governments, has no place in the municipality. There should be but one branch of councils, one-half of the members elected on the district system, the other half at large.

3. The appointments of the mayor should not be subject to the advice and consent of select councils. This is necessary to enforce political responsibility.
4. Police Department. In cities with a population of fifty thousand (50,000) and over, a department of police with a commissioner appointed by the mayor, should be established, subject to civil service regulations formulated in law. The power of appointing members of the police force should be vested in the commissioner.
5. The power of the city controller should be enlarged.
6. The granting of franchises should be subject to the following conditions :
  - a. Limitation of term to twenty-five (25) years.
  - b. Return to the city should be based on gross receipts.
  - c. Accounts should be kept in accordance with forms presented by the city comptroller.
7. There should be some provision for uniformity of accounting of cities of the third class.

These recommendations were made the basis for the discussions of the convention. The outlook for the securing of remedial legislation is most favorable, owing to the concerted action of the cities most interested.

*Pennsylvania Sanitary Convention.*<sup>1</sup> The eleventh state sanitary convention of Pennsylvania was held at Mechanicsburg, May 23-25. The session was principally devoted to the discussion of the various phases of rural sanitation. The papers agreed that rural sanitation to-day is as unsatisfactory as when the State Board of Health was established. Dairies are unsanitary; school houses are badly located, lighted and ventilated; rivers and wells are constantly polluted, as is testified annually by typhoid in 500 towns; the dead are buried without any record; statistics of births, sickness and mortality are wanting; infection is neither prevented nor controlled. The representatives from Allentown, Norristown, Shenandoah, Phenixville, Lancaster and McKeesport testified that cases of typhoid, diphtheria and scarlet fever were traced to suburbs and townships without boards of health. All united in declaring that the pressing need to-day is effectual rural sanitation, that the safety of cities is constantly menaced by the existing laxness, and that the present administrative machinery is not capable of enforcing sanitary law in rural districts.

Various suggestions were made looking towards a reorganization of the state sanitary service. In the past, the legislature has attempted to correct evils by creating additional inefficient machinery or by

<sup>1</sup> Communication of Dr. Wm. H. Allen, of the University of Pennsylvania.

giving additional power to boards which made no pretense of activity. The state veterinarian urged the necessity of regular inspection of dairies and the publication of results, as is now practiced at Williamsport and Meadville. It was claimed by various health officers that the cities could not afford to inspect all of the dairies; it was also urged that not one town in a hundred would institute such inspection. Therefore the establishment of county or state inspection was demanded.

As a result of the conference the following changes were recommended for the consideration of the committee on legislation. The substitution of state for local authority, and to that end the establishment of a state bureau of health with a superintendent and an advisory board; the districting of the state for inspection and administration, at the expense of the state; displacement of the board system by executive officers; the substitution of compensated service and notification for volunteer service, and notification of infection; the regulation of state aid to hospitals so that the erection of fever hospitals will be encouraged; the substitution of the county for the borough and school district as units of administration, and the establishment of a bureau of vital statistics.

No better proof is needed of the necessity of such fundamental changes as here suggested than the fact that only thirty out of three thousand sanitary administrative units were represented in the convention.

**Pittsburg.**<sup>1</sup>—*Civil Service.* At the last session of the Legislature, the Director of the Department of Public Safety obtained the passage of a law enabling him to introduce a system of competitive examinations to govern appointments to the fire department and the police force. The first report of the police bureau since the introduction of the system has been presented to city councils. The superintendent of police says: "We have no hesitation whatever in saying that the system will result in great good to the bureau from the fact that it very largely eliminates politics and places men on merit for appointments. Experience of the year has taught us that fully 50 per cent of applicants fail on physical examination, and of the remaining number, possibly 25 per cent, fail on the mental examination, thereby raising the force to a higher physical and mental standard." It is to be noted that the introduction of this reform was not due to the pressure of outside sentiment, but to the personal initiative of the head of the department who is thus strongly interested in seeing that the system is fairly worked. The success of the system in improving the personnel of the police force tends to promote the extension of it to other departments of the city government.

<sup>1</sup>Communication of Henry Jones Ford, Esq., Pittsburg, Pa.

The act by which the system of competitive examinations was introduced is a general law applicable to cities of the second class. It, therefore, applies to Allegheny City, which is also a city of the second class, but it has not been put into effect there. Mayor James G. Wyman, of Allegheny City, is now taking steps to establish a civil service commission and put the law into operation. Mayor Wyman and the Director of Public Safety in that city are chiefs of opposing political factions and the mayor's present interest in civil service reform is ascribed by his opponents to his hostility to the director, but this, if true, illustrates the way in which competition of political factions for public favor promotes reform movements.

*Party Politics and Governmental Forms.* The case of Pittsburg and Allegheny are particularly interesting to students of municipal government from the evidence they afford of the fact that governmental character is determined, not by charter forms themselves, but by the functional activities developed under them. The two cities are adjacent, separated only by the Allegheny River, and their population is the same in general character. Indeed, the two cities constitute one business and social community. They have the same form of government and yet they differ widely in the general character and tendencies of their government. In both, the heads of departments are elected by the councils, while the mayor is chosen by popular election, but in Allegheny there is a chronic opposition between the mayor and the department chief controlling the police and fire service, while in Pittsburg harmonious co-operation is the rule. During a recent contest over the nomination of legislative candidates in an Allegheny district, the mayor and the department chief were antagonistic faction leaders, each accusing the other of abusing his official authority for partisan purposes. In an altercation upon the city hall steps the mayor was knocked down by a captain of police, who, although temporarily suspended, was exonerated and restored to his duties. In Pittsburg the character of the men chosen to high office and the tone of official propriety which prevails make such an occurrence impossible.

The cause of the remarkable difference which exists is to be found in political usage. In Pittsburg mayors are nominated by conventions of delegates acting under the instruction and advice of party managers, whose influence also guides councils in electing the heads of departments, and in this way administrative unity is obtained. In Allegheny, the mayor is nominated by the direct vote of the people and in the canvass party lines are effaced. The contest excites intense popular interest and brings out such a heavy vote that the total poll exceeds even that at a presidential election. It has been found in practice that no one can be elected except a candidate of the kind the

politicians call "a mixer," a man who goes from saloon to saloon and other places of popular resort, shaking hands, treating and making friends by being "a good fellow." Under these circumstances it has happened that a man whose term as mayor was cut short by a conviction for malfeasance and a term of imprisonment, obtained a re-election by active personal canvass on the platform, "give a man a chance to show that he can do right." It may be unpleasant to consider such facts but they certainly deserve consideration.

**Boston.**—*Mayor's Message.* The inaugural address of Mr. Hart, of Boston, contains a review of the work of the several departments during the year 1899. This review shows very clearly the growth of the Metropolitan District System, which is making Boston a part of a larger municipal unit for the performance of the more local important services. There is at present a Metropolitan Park District, a Metropolitan Water District and a Metropolitan Sewerage District. The latest of these developments is the Metropolitan Water System, which was taken over by the Metropolitan Water Board on the first of January, 1898. Since that time the expenditures of the board have been nearly twelve million dollars. "Annual assessments are made upon the various cities and towns of the metropolitan districts, to defray the costs of maintenance and interest on the debt and for the establishment of a sinking fund to pay the principal of the indebtedness incurred when the loans authorized by the commonwealth shall mature." Boston's proportion of total assessment was 83.39 per cent in 1898 and 82.37 per cent in 1899. It is the opinion of the board that the annual cost of water to all the different parts of the Metropolitan Water District will be materially decreased by the establishment of the Metropolitan water works, and that the water rates in Boston, as well as to the other cities and towns, may be considerably reduced in the future.

*Local Taxation.* During the past year there has been considerable agitation for the revision of the state law relating to the taxation and indebtedness of the city of Boston. An interesting communication to the Boston Real Estate Exchange by the Hon. Nathan Matthews, Jr., formerly mayor of the city, reviews the local financial situation and makes the following recommendations:

1. To repeal authority given to the city, but not yet exercised, to borrow money outside of the debt limit.
2. To raise the debt limit to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent in order to enable the city to finish the work already begun under authority to borrow outside of the debt limit.
3. To provide that all suburban streets not exceeding fifty feet in width shall be built upon the assessment plan.

4. That no loan for improving sidewalks, or any other form of street construction, shall be for longer than ten years, thus making reasonably sure that the work will survive the loan.

5. To repeal the law making an independent government of the school committee and give the mayor power to appoint both the members of the school committee (reduced, perhaps, in number) and the members of the board of street commissioners.

6. To prohibit the borrowing of money to pay interest and sinking fund requirements.

7. To prohibit the borrowing of money for the extension of the city's water mains.

8. To leave the tax limit as it is at present, namely, nine in a thousand of the average valuation for the five preceding years for both city and county purposes.

**Cincinnati.**<sup>1</sup>—*Legislation Affecting the City.* The legislature which adjourned on April 16, 1900, enacted few general laws of special benefit to the good government of the city. The municipal code, which was supported by all friends of good government, was defeated. Two years hence another effort in this direction will be made—then it is to be hoped that separate measures for civil service, for ballot reform and federal system of government will be introduced, instead of embodying all in one measure. The most important piece of legislation was the annexation bill. In accordance with its provision an ordinance was passed providing for the annexation to the city of many villages and hamlets having a population of about twenty-five thousand and a tax valuation of \$20,000,000. This was to have been submitted on May 29, 1900, to a vote of the citizens of the city and the district proposed to be annexed, but in the interval the several villages anticipating annexation entered upon all sorts of wild-cat schemes of public improvement and franchise granting. Many hundred thousand dollars of bonds were issued (most of them to be sold before the election) and many valuable franchises were granted to speculators. Public opinion soon changed, and on May 21 the board of legislation repealed the annexation ordinance. Cincinnati will therefore not enjoy the title "Greater Cincinnati" in time for the 1900 census. It is possible that if the villages recall their bond issues and can procure a surrender of their grants, that annexation may yet be accomplished.

**Omaha.**<sup>2</sup>—*Collection of Personal Taxes.* One of the agreeable surprises resulting from a change in the personnel of city officials incident to the recent municipal election is the policy of the new city treasurer in undertaking a literal enforcement of the law relative to the tax on personal property. This tax has generally been a farce,

<sup>1</sup> Communication of Max B. May, Esq., of Cincinnati.

<sup>2</sup> Communication of Charles S. Lobingier, of the Omaha Bar.

not only in Omaha, but throughout Nebraska. The subject of taxation is easily hidden from the assessor or moved from one county to another, and the steps taken to enforce even the partial and imperfect levy thus made have usually been half-hearted and ineffectual. The consequence has been that a large portion of personality has always escaped taxation, while in Omaha the payment of such taxes has been the exception rather than the rule, the whole system degenerating into one of voluntary contribution by the taxpayer. The question of reform in this direction has for some time engaged the attention of the Commercial Club, and the present city treasurer, upon assuming the duties of office, declared it to be a part of his policy to attempt in earnest the collection of personal taxes. In carrying out this policy, he proceeded to revive and put in practice the provisions of an almost obsolete statute which re-enacts the antiquated common law remedy of distress and authorizes the treasurer to distrain, or seize without judicial process, the personal property of the delinquent taxpayer. In one case a dilatory citizen, whose unpaid personal taxes amounted to about \$1,000, found himself bereft of valuable household furniture, which was taken and sold by the agents of the treasurer. In another instance, a local merchant, whose debt to the city for the same item was in the neighborhood of \$600, found himself confronted with the alternative of paying this amount or having a portion of his stock seized, and chose the former. So effective have been such examples that other delinquents have hastened to settle their accounts with the city, and on the single day of May 24, the payment of back personal taxes reached the unprecedented figure of more than \$2,000, a fact whose significance will be understood, when it is stated that this tax, in the case of the average citizen, amounts usually to less than \$5.00.

Some interesting legal questions have arisen in connection with this new policy of enforcing the tax law, and several suits have already been started to test the legality of the method. It has been urged that the statute authorizing the remedy of distress or distraint, which is wholly summary, and prevents a resort to the courts, is an infringement of that section of the Bill of Rights which prohibits the taking of private property "without due process of law." In Kentucky, however, where the constitution contains a similar clause, the court of appeals has recently rejected this contention. In *Garnett v. Jennings* (Ky. 1898), 44 S. W. Rep. 382, the validity of a statute authorizing a landlord to distrain for rent (which was precisely the scope of the common law remedy) was in question, and the court said:

"It is further objected by appellants that the whole law of distress is contrary to, and in conflict with, both the federal and state constitutions, as depriving the tenant of his property 'without due process of law.' But the words 'due process of law' do not necessarily imply

a trial by jury, as seems to be contended on behalf of appellants. 'The better and larger definition of "due process of law" is that it means law in its regular course of administration through courts of justice.' 2 Kent Com. 13. The words were intended to have the same meaning as the words 'by the law of the land' in Magna Charta. Murray *v.* Improvement Co., 18 How. 276. But the remedy of the landlord by distress was in existence at the time of the adoption of the constitution, though greatly modified in the more oppressive features which appertained to it at the common law."

It would seem that this language is *a fortiori* applicable to the Nebraska statute, since the latter was designed to aid the state in the exercise of its taxing power, and was not, like the Kentucky statute, merely a provision for determining controversies between private citizens.

**Havana.**—*Financial Condition of the City.* The report of the Havana Finance Commission appointed by the military governor of Havana contains a large number of important recommendations for the reorganization of the financial system of the city. The principal items of income, taking the average of the last ten years, were as follows:

1. From property owned by the city.	
(a) Water rents . . . . .	\$272,000 00
(b) Markets . . . . .	145,000 00
(c) Slaughter houses . . . . .	138,000 00
2. From direct taxes.	
(a) Tax on consumption of meat . . . . .	\$676,000 00
(b) Tax on city and rural real estate . . .	190,000 00
(c) Industrial tax on persons and industries . . . . .	238,000 00
3. Miscellaneous receipts.	
Amounting to about . . . . .	\$166,000 00

When American rule replaced Spanish dominion the anomalies of the financial situation were so numerous that nothing short of complete reorganization would meet the needs of the situation. The finance committee made a very thorough study of the system of taxation, the sources of revenue other than taxation, and the financial management of the various public works. It found a series of monopolies which had been granted under Spanish rule, and which prevented the readjustment of the system upon a sound basis. The most important of these monopolies was the right of carrying dressed beef from the slaughter houses to the butcher shops, which had been granted in 1706 to the high constable of the city of Havana as partial payment for the services which he rendered in that office. A fee of

fifty cents for each carcass was charged for such transportation, which netted a handsome revenue to the state. The commission recommended that the city assume charge of the cartage of meat and that the price be reduced to twenty-five or thirty cents per carcass. This was done by the military governor, but appeal was taken to the Government at Washington by the owners of the monopoly, and the matter has not as yet been definitely decided.

Another change, which was made immediately after the establishment of American military rule, was the abolition of the tax on meat. The commission recommends furthermore:

1. A change in the system of water rents, so as to bear less heavily upon the poor of the city and more equitably upon the wealthy residents and upon hotels, factories, etc., and that a special meter service be adopted for hotels, factories, baths and other industrial enterprises.
2. The abolition of the state tax on improved city real estate.
3. The establishment of the tax on docks.
4. The reduction of the fees for the registry of property transfers.

The commission is still continuing its work, which will require some months for completion.

#### FOREIGN CITIES.

**London.**—*The Housing of the Poor.* During the last ten years the cities of Great Britain have undertaken to improve the housing conditions of the working classes through the destruction of insanitary areas and the construction of model dwellings of both the tenement and single house type. The Annual Report of the Housing of the Working Classes Committee of the London County Council contains a record of the work of the county council during the year ending March 31, 1899. Under the act of 1890 the administrative authorities of London are empowered to undertake four different classes of improvements:

*First.* The county council, after sanction by the secretary of state and parliament, may carry out plans for the improvement of insanitary areas which are of such size as to be of general importance to the whole country. In any such scheme it is essential that dwellings should be provided on the area dealt with for at least half the persons displaced.

*Second.* The constituent vestries and district boards which exercise administrative authority over portions of the present administrative County of London may institute proceedings before a magistrate for the closing and demolition of single houses which are unfit for human habitation. Sections 39 and 46 of the act enable the vestries and district boards and the county council, either in conjunction or other-

wise, to undertake schemes for the improvement of areas which are too small to be of general importance to the whole county. In any such scheme it is not essential that dwelling accommodations for the persons displaced should be provided.

*Third.* Part III of the of the act enables the county council to purchase by agreement or (with the consent of the secretary of state and parliament) by compulsion, houses for the accommodations of persons of the working class, or land for the erection of such houses. In addition to these powers the vestries and district boards may obtain the closing and demolition of insanitary habitations by proceedings before a magistrate under the Public Health Act of 1891.

The pressing need for housing accommodations led to a series of investigations as to the possibility of erecting model tenements in different portions of the County of London. The county council adopted the principle that housing accommodations should be provided for a number of persons equal to those displaced by any improvement, but that such accommodations need not necessarily be in the immediate neighborhood of the improvement. The most important work carried out during the year 1898-99 was the completion of what is known as the Boundary Street Improvement. Three blocks of dwellings costing nearly \$200,000 were erected on an area which had been covered with the worst type of slum tenements. Less than half of the area was used for building purposes, the remainder being devoted to widening of the streets and the construction of a public square. The building erected contained accommodations for 808 persons in tenements of six rooms, 9 of four rooms, 74 of three rooms, and 67 of two rooms. Five other blocks of tenements have been begun. The total cost of each will be nearly \$400,000. They will provide accommodation for 1,636 persons in self-contained tenements, of which one is of five rooms, ten of four rooms, 117 of three rooms and 211 of two rooms.

The number of persons who were displaced in this area was 5,719. Under the plan approved by parliament the county council was required to provide accommodation for not less than 4,700 persons. As a matter of fact, rehousing conditions had been planned for 5,524, which is only 195 less than the number displaced and 824 more than the scheme requires. In addition to this 18 stores and 77 workshops have been provided. The 5,524 persons will be accommodated in 1,069 tenements, making an average of 5.168 persons per tenement. The distribution of these tenements are as follows: One-room tenements, 15; two-room tenements, 541; three-room tenements, 400; four-room tenements, 103; five-room tenements, 7; six-room tenements, 3.

In its report the committee says: "The buildings are so arranged that nearly every room commands a pleasant outlook. Every habitable room enjoys a forty-five-degree angle of light, both horizontally

and vertically. The entrance avenue is sixty feet and the principal streets fifty feet wide. All of these will eventually be paved with asphalt. The paving of the streets on the northern half of the area is nearly completed, while that of those on the southeastern portion is in progress. The cost of these paving works will be about sixty-five thousand dollars. There are three public gardens of an aggregate area of nearly three-fourths of an acre. Washing accommodation is only provided in two of the blocks. For the remainder, a central laundry has been built containing 42 troughs, 42 drying horses, 3 centrifugal wringing machines, 3 box mangles and 1 roller mangle. Behind the laundry is a small annex containing 12 hot and cold slipper-baths and 1 cold shower-bath, and over the laundry are two club-rooms for the use of the tenants. Interest and sinking fund upon the capital cost of this laundry form a charge upon the various buildings. A general bakery is also provided on the area. During the progress of the reconstruction of the area the cost of building has considerably increased. The London Building Act, 1894, has increased the thickness of walls, changed the slope of the roof, etc. From May to July, 1896, the wages of all the skilled trades were increased one cent per hour, and this was followed, on the first of June, 1897, by a similar increase in the wages of the laborers. The cost of materials has risen very considerably, especially bricks, Portland cement, steel joists, slates, lead and zinc. Further increases may be anticipated from the Workmen's Compensation Act and the new drainage by-laws. In spite of this, however, it is anticipated that, after payment of interest on the capital at 3 per cent, and provision for a sinking fund to replace the cost of land and buildings within terms varying from fifty-two to sixty years, no charge upon the county rate will be involved. The dwellings are at present managed by a superintendent, who is in direct communication with the valuer's office, and who is assisted by caretakers. These latter occupy their tenements rent free, and have an allowance of gas, and generally a small weekly payment in addition. The rents are collected by collectors in the comptroller's department, and on a rent roll of \$60,169.97 for the past year the loss of rent amounts only to \$365.98, or 6 per cent. The committee have under consideration the question of the possibility of more economical management by a closer combination of the various duties required, and hope shortly to be able to report on the matter."

*Drainage.* The annual report of the Main Drainage Committee of the London County Council gives some interesting facts concerning experiments with sewage filtration. During the past year the committee has been conducting investigations into the practicability of treating the sewage of the metropolis by means of filtration through coke beds. In speaking of the plan the committee says: "Such system is really

in vogue in many of the large provincial towns, but as London sewage is of a special character, containing manufacturing refuse of greatly varied descriptions in addition to the ordinary house drainage, considerable experience has to be obtained as to the best method of constructing the coke-beds, and as to the quantity of sewage that can be dealt with without causing foulness in the filter. Small experimental coke and Kentish rag-stone filters, varying in depth from four feet to twelve feet, have been in use for some time at the Barking and Crossness outfall works, and a portion of the filtrate is subjected to a second process of filtration. The results hitherto obtained show that the filters can remove the whole of the suspended matter from the crude sewage, as well as over 50 per cent of the dissolved oxidizable and putrescible matters. The filtrate thus produced remains free from objectionable odor when it is kept in open or closed vessels, provided the bacteria present in it are not removed or killed by special subsequent treatment. Gold fish and dace have lived for months in the first filtrate from the coke beds, and it is believed that they would live and thrive in this liquid for an indefinite period. One of the main objects in view in conducting these filtration experiments has been to ascertain the effect of filtration on the number and nature of the bacteria present in the raw sewage, and the services of a bacteriologist have therefore been retained for a further period to make the necessary investigation. Dr. A. C. Houston, who has been engaged for this work, has already issued a report dealing with the number and kind of bacteria in the sewage as it arrives at Barking and Crossness. Dr. Clowes, the council's chief chemist, has also, in conjunction with Dr. Houston, prepared a further report on the whole of the experiments, and the results obtained, both from a chemical and bacteriological aspect, are fully dealt with. So far the bacteriological examination of the filtrate goes to show that filtration through coke does not, by any means, remove the bacteria from the crude sewage, and does not materially reduce the number. The presence of many of the bacteria in the effluent is found to be not only unobjectionable, but necessary for the purpose of completing the purification of the effluent after it has flowed into the river."

*Parks and Open Spaces.* The report of the Committee on Parks and Open Spaces contains a review of the development of the park system of London. In 1890 the number of park and open spaces under the direct administration of the county council was 40, in 1899 the number had increased to 89. The acreage had increased from 2,656 in 1890 to 3,751 in 1899. This does not include that portion of the park system under the control of the district and vestry boards, which is the most important part of the whole system. During the year nearly \$40,000 was expended for concerts in these parks.